



City of Auburn, Maine

Office of the Mayor

60 Court Street | Auburn, Maine 04210

www.auburnmaine.gov | 207.333.6601

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Auburn Mayor Jason J. Levesque

Over these last few months, I have been reminded about the fragility of life, our society, and our economy. We have all been tested, tried, and challenged in unprecedented ways. What I have seen at the heart of it all is a spirit that is simply astounding. I also see our community's will, strength, determination, individuality, and ingenuity to overcome these challenges.

In the Army - and in business - I learned that when in crisis, fearlessly taking the initiative and working to control the tempo of your situation helps you to overcome and advance, both personally and professionally.

I believe that this applies at home, in our local businesses and in our government. And I believe that we will all do our part and together, we will not only recover, but - true to our City's motto - we will make "no backward steps" and we will usher in resurgence and revitalization here in Auburn.

For the past several weeks, we have embraced **resilience, response** and looked toward **recovery**. We have shown our resilience, day after day, and in countless ways; especially in the kindness we show to our neighbors and family, and in the support we provide to our local businesses. Our response is ongoing and ranges from our first-in-the-state small business bridge loans, to standing up the first municipal food distribution center within days of the outbreak. I *know* that Auburn will continue to lead the way as we move toward recovery.

To recover, we must visualize what the future entails, and what we need to do to prepare. What better way to prepare for the future than by taking an honest inventory of the environment around us? We are strong economically, and while the core of our businesses has taken a hit, the vast majority will recover. But how do we recognize and seize the opportunities that this crisis will present? The way we do business has certainly changed. More remote workers and more flexible schedules will result in a large portion

of the workforce that will not need to be physically anchored to large commercial buildings in expensive urban areas. Our workforce will have the ability to locate in an affordable, desirable area where internet connectivity and quality of life will be determining factors versus proximity to employer. I see this as an immediate opportunity for Auburn.

To embrace this opportunity, our recovery must start at the heart of our community – in our downtown. By putting federal recovery dollars and local stimulus to work, a modernization of our zoning policies, and effective partnership with organizations around the state, we can focus on creating more market rate homes. Rehabilitation of existing homes and a targeted approach to bringing more business to our downtown, will provide occupational, cultural and commercial opportunities that our entire region will benefit from.

Our recovery efforts will be critical in our long-term vision of broadening our tax base and lessening tax burdens on our working families and small businesses. Our cities future success lies in smart growth throughout anchored by a commercially viable downtown.

Over the last thirty years, we have commissioned numerous studies and have had countless discussions on moving our city forward. Now, more than ever before, is the time to act. We have the data; we have applied the knowledge; and our residents have the wisdom needed to execute our plans with great effect. We can and will make our downtown area as splendid as it once was; with bustling shops and beautiful homes, tree-lined avenues and more importantly, opportunities for all, not just a few.

I truly believe that at this time next year, we will be stronger than ever, both economically and emotionally. In the weeks to come, plans will be rolled out, projects will be announced, and people throughout Auburn will be working in and on our City; all of us with our eyes and our hearts set not just on recovery, but on a resurgence that will show the world that Auburn is thriving!

Our City Council, city leadership and city staff all stand ready to lead us carefully and deliberately back to the Auburn we all know and love, and as residents, I am confident that we will seize the opportunities presented and focus on our own resurgence through action.